

as a socially isolating “costly signal” corresponding to the position of those who identify themselves with exclusive religious communities. Nevertheless, Schmidt shows that in many cases, the aim of the early secularists was to create more room for greater tolerance in the society.

During the last couple of decades, there can be seen a polarization regarding religion. On the one hand, the rapid growth of Pentecostal Christianity as well as the expansion of Islam have been two remarkable trends. On the other hand, the number of unbelievers has also increased at an accelerating rate, and belonging to the “Nones” is not as culturally stigmatizing as it used to be. In the U.S., President Obama’s objective to neutralize official ceremonies was seen as an approving signal for secularization in general. It remains to be seen what the era of the Number 45 (Trump) brings to the discussion on the atheistic values.

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Mark Shackleton, ed., *International Adoption in North American Literature and Culture: Transnational, Transracial, and Transcultural Narratives*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017. XIV + 306 pages. ISBN: 978-3-319-539941-0.

At least since the 2010 publication of Mark C. Jerng’s study of transracial adoption in the US, *Claiming Others: Transracial Adoption and National Belonging*, scholars have been examining histories and stories of adoption in the US and beyond its borders in ways that have frequently disrupted familiar chronologies, interrogated known concepts, and expanded the parameters for studying the US as an adopter nation. *International Adoption in North American Literature and Culture: Transnational, Transracial, and Transcultural Narratives* continues this practice with its collection of twelve historically and culturally grounded studies of adoption history and representations of adoption in a range of media, genres, and discourses. Taken together, these articles, written primarily by historians and literary scholars, provide a sense of both similarities and differences in the practices, experiences, and dynamics of international adoption and their representations. Uniformly strong, the articles also impart a sense of urgency about the issues they take on, for questions concerning identity, kinship, and family at the individual level resonate strongly at national and international

levels as well, as do the complex workings of race, ethnicity, class, gender, social power and social justice which frequently feature in the dynamics of international adoption.

A short preface by the editor, Mark Shackleton, serves as an introduction, situating *International Adoption in North American Literature and Culture* in the field of adoption studies, in relation to important scholars such as Marianne Novy, Mark C. Jerng, David L. Eng, Cynthia Callahan, Margaret Homans and John McLeod—himself a contributor to the volume. The introduction observes that the concept of transnational is expanded in this volume to include adoption of Native Americans and First Nations people by, primarily, non-Native Americans and Canadians. Indeed, this is a strength of the three-part collection, which leads with 5 chapters that analyze aspects of adoption in Native and non-Native North America. Roger L. Nichols compares post-WW II policies and practices in the US and Canada that sought to make indigenous children available for adoption and foster care in white families, such as the Indian Adoption Project in the US and the so-called “sixties scoop” in Canada. Margaret D. Jacobs, whose forceful comparisons of indigenous child removal in the US, Canada, and Australia are essential reading, here focuses on how the Canadian/US border worked in a high-profile adoption case, in which three Métis children in Saskatchewan were taken from their foster parents who had close local and indigenous ties, and were placed with a white couple in Michigan. Her analysis demonstrates the cultural biases of social workers, analysts, and decision-makers, and complicates many of the ideas that continue to direct adoption and foster-care placement, such as the “best interests” of the child, permanence of placement, and stimulating environment. In the case of the Laliberté children, ideas of “permanence” and “stimulation” for children skewed policies and decisions, leading to the children’s forced separation and removal from long-term and loving foster parents. Shackleton’s own article provides an interesting interface between Native Studies and Disability Studies, focusing on fetal alcohol syndrome in adoption narratives by Michael Dorris, Tomson Highway, and Louise Erdrich. The last two articles of the section concern literary representations; Pirjo Ahokas provides an intersectional analysis of how forced removal and intergenerational trauma affect identity formation in the “orphan/ed” protagonists of Linda Hogan’s *Solar Storms* and Sherman Alexie’s *Indian Killer*, and Bo Pettersson reads Forrest Carter’s problematic text, *The Education of Little Tree*, focusing on adoption *in* the text and *outside* of it, in Carter’s appropriation

of a Native authorial identity.

The second section contains just two articles, one focusing on the life narratives of Korean-American adoptee Jane Jeong Trenka, the other on fiction by Monique Truong and Aimee Phan, both writers dealing with Vietnamese-American adoption. Lena Ahlin historicizes US adoption of Korean children after the war by connecting adoption to the military presence and military policies, noting how Korean orphans bolstered America's self-image after the war. She uses insights from autobiography and trauma theory to show Trenka's resolute resistance to the myth of reunion, as well as to explore the tensions in Trenka's texts between adoption as trauma and adoption as a more productive site for questioning identity formations. Begoña Simal-González situates the fictional works in the context of Operation Babylift—the controversial rescue/removal of some 2000 South Vietnamese orphans to the US as the war in Southeast Asia came to an end—and examines the works' concerns with race, family, and identity. She concludes that Truong's *Bitter in the Mouth* provides a model for what McLeod calls "adoptive being." Both articles combine historically informed readings with close attention to narrative pattern and detail.

This combination of historicity and attentive close-reading also characterizes the lead article in the third section, dealing with Europe and America. Alan Shima's analysis of transnational and transracial adoption in Mona Friis Bertheussen's film about twin Chinese sisters, one adopted to Norway, the other to the US, attends to the ways in which gaps, silences, and absences in the film contribute to viewer enchantment with "transnational notions of belonging and being." In the following article, Rosemarie Peña presents the understudied history of Black German adoptees to the US. Fearing that the over 4,500 children born to white German mothers and African American military fathers were bound to be spurned and denigrated in post-war Germany, an adoption initiative was undertaken. The history of these adoptees, which notably preceded US-Korean adoption, is unique in several ways; among them, the children were adopted primarily by African Americans, who were otherwise disadvantaged in adoption procedures. Peña details complex experiences of race and racism in this group, augmenting our understanding of transracial and transnational adoption and diasporic identity. Transnational adoption as a form of diasporic identity is also the focus of Christine Vogt-William's treatment of fiction by South Asian writers. Jane Weiss provides an unusual focus for her discussion of "the pluralism of 'adoptive being'" for she analyzes the Scottish section

of Susan Warner's 1851 bestseller, *The Wide, Wide World*. Finally, John McLeod compares the journalistic and film accounts of Philomena Lee's search for her son, coerced from her by Irish nuns and adopted away to the US. The analysis departs from the history of the infamous Magdalene laundry and Irish Catholic institutions, which, as McLeod insists, colluded with the State "in compelling vulnerable women to surrender their children for adoption while signing documentation that perversely declared this act a choice freely made" (278). McLeod's delicate analysis of important departures from Martin Sixsmith's book in Stephen Frears's 2013 film, *Philomena*, demonstrates the multiple imbalances in Irish-American adoption and Frears's efforts to address these, bringing Ireland's adoption industry into memorable relation with American transnational adoption.

This volume has a three-part structure organized around the idea of geography, but the borders between these parts do not quite hold. Places, histories, and cultures overlap and intertwine. While this point is made by the editor, I would conclude by reiterating it: International adoption in American culture and literature is a complex and ambiguous affair. The articles, taken together, do justice to this complexity.

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